

Defense Aspects of Union Treaty Discussed

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[Report by Colonel A. Belousov: "The Future Nature of Defense"]

[Text] The future all-Union treaty is attracting more and more attention. Consultations between plenipotentiary representatives of Union republics and USSR Supreme Soviet working groups were already held during the first stage. It was deemed expedient to set up a preparatory committee which would comprise the top leaders of Union republics, the USSR president, the chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, and the chairman of the USSR Council of Ministers. As for the expert groups whose purpose is to assist the committee's work, they have already embarked on discussions of the all-Union treaty's details.

The group of experts on problems of defense, military policy, state security, and border protection began its work in Moscow 31 August. Representatives of the Russian, Belorussian, Turkmen, Kazakh, Tajik, and Kirghiz Union republics; USSR people's deputies; and USSR Ministry of Defense experts took part in the exchange of opinions on that day. The conversation began with a discussion of the main point: What should our Armed Forces be like? Should they be a single interlinked complex functioning on the basis of decisions made by the top organs of USSR state power, or should the republics autonomously decide questions of defense?

V. Panferov, acting chairman of the RSFSR Council of Ministers State Committee for Military Questions; Belorussian SSR [Soviet Socialist Republic] People's Deputies L. Privalov and V. Gribanov; Kazakh SSR People's Deputy T. Zhumasultanov; Turkmen SSR People's Deputy P. Korotkiy; Tajik SSR Representative A. Abdurozinov; and Kirghiz SSR Representative S. Iskakov supported in principle the view expressed by military experts headed by Lieutenant General of Aviation M. Kuznetsov; Colonel V. Ochirov, deputy chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Committee for Defense and State Security Questions; and I. Novoselov, consultant of a USSR Supreme Soviet Secretariat Section; and spoke in favor of unified Armed Forces. This was preceded by quite heated debates, and differences of opinions on individual issues emerged even between members of the same delegations. Military questions which are the exclusive province of union republics also became topics of considered discussion.

G. Tarazevich, chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet Soviet of Nationalities Commission for Nationalities Policy and Interethnic Relations, addressed the representatives of union republics and specialists 1 September.

The expert groups continue their work.

Urals Bacteriological Accident Suspected in 1979

90SV0013A Moscow LITERATURNAYA GAZETA
in Russian No 34, 22 Aug 90 p 12

[Article by Natalya Zenova, LITERATURNAYA GAZETA special correspondent for the Urals: "Military Secret: Reasons for the Tragedy in Sverdlovsk Must Be Investigated"]

[Text] "In the spring of 1968 in the American state of Utah...not far from the military experimentation center for chemical and biological weapons at Dugway, 6,400 sheep suddenly dropped dead.

"Military officials denied any involvement in this event, maintaining an innocent air over the course of eight months. Under the pressure of evidence, however, they were forced to acknowledge 'a slight mistake' committed while testing a new variety of weapon.

"Wind direction changed unexpectedly," an Army representative stated, explaining that the sheep had entered a lethal cloud.

"And what if the wind had carried it in the other direction?" a correspondent asked. "There could be a city there!"

Thus begins a frightening fantasy concerning the destiny of a fictitious city written by American author Henry Sattou. A translation of his novel "Thunder Amidst Clear Skies" (American title—"Vector") was published by NASH SOVREMENNİK in 1977.

Yes, There Could Be a City There

Magazine book excerpts lie on my desk, read and reread with pencil in hand.... But not at all because the novel staggers with its artistic sophistication—it looks adequate from that point of view, but no better than that. And in no way for the reason the editors had hoped for, predicting that the novel "will attract the Soviet reader's attention by its antimilitarist orientation," or that it "truthfully reveals the inhumanity of the American military-industrial complex...."

For me "Thunder Amidst Clear Skies" is not simply a menacing futuristic warning. And the destruction of its heroes is not just the death of literary characters. The novel directs my thoughts far from "there"; on the contrary, it rivets them to something that occurred "here."

...At that time too it was spring. And people also fell sick for unexplained reasons. And they too died in torment. And even the number of victims was about the same.

Yes, I am today firmly convinced that in the spring of 1979 a deadly cloud arose over our military center and the wind carried it precisely in the direction where not only "there could be a city," but where my native Sverdlovsk was.

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Understanding the responsibility of such a statement, I cannot waste newspaper space on emotion—I need to use it for proof. For those who want to experience psychologically exactly what happened, I refer to the above-mentioned novel of H. Satton—everything there is “one to one,” as many of the people from my region believe.

And so it was April of 1979. At first rumors began to spread of sudden deaths—“medicine doesn’t help at all!” Then conversations concerning some old woman who sold the meat of either a sheep or cow that had fallen dead, about a dug-up cattle burial ground. At the same time warnings appeared in local newspapers: Cattle in the Urals have been weakened by the difficult winter. They are prone to infection and therefore it is possible—you will note, just possible!—that there will be incidents of malignant anthrax infection. And not a word here regarding outbreaks of sickness of any kind among animals or people.

But people were dying. Primarily men of healthy age, and basically from the same area. And the area was a very suspicious one—Chkalovskiy—where the so-called 19th military installation is located. What was going on inside the entry gate of this closed station along the Sverdlovsk city line no one had a right to know; but there were many, of course, who knew. In any case they knew bacteriologists were working there. That is why, as soon as the geography of the center was revealed, there was an immediate drop in interest shown in the old woman with the sheep and precautionary notices regarding meat. And someone else heard “a voice from over the knoll” telling of a “bacteriological explosion” in Sverdlovsk. Some people saw with their own eyes how in Chkalovskiy Rayon they were washing down the sidewalks, roads, and roofs with soap; removing the topmost soil layer; and rushing to put down asphalt in places where asphalt had never been. It was also noticed that people in protective clothing were taking some kind of samples near the installation....

A panic grew....

I admit, none of us local journalists rushed out to the ramparts at that time. I remember well how at VECHERKA where I worked, the telephone suddenly began to ring with its desperate, intercity ring and our official secretary, alternately turning red and growing pale, jumped out into the corridor. At this the entire editorial staff gathered by the doors, gazing with horror at the instrument by which a correspondent from some American newspaper had just gotten through to our closed city. The telephone rang again, and the most despairing among us warily took the phone and said, murdering the language: “Alo, who’sis? Well, ain’t no one here....”

Later everything calmed down. And for many years no one dug up this burial ground of oblivion.... But people remained witnesses of what had taken place, and primarily the doctors.

Doctors’ Testimony

N. Bezrukov, anesthesiologist, Hospital No. 20

“I was in charge of a resuscitation division. Suddenly sick people started coming in one after another diagnosed with ‘pneumonia.’ When five or six of them had amassed, all with the same clinical picture and speed of departure—to the morgue—we began to suspect some kind of especially dangerous infection. You understand, the symptoms were unlike those of pneumonia; everything flared up instantaneously and went to emphysema. The patients died on an artificial respirator, receiving tremendous doses of medicine.

“Then a culture arrived from our laboratory—probably malignant anthrax, but not absolutely for certain.... What struck us? The batch was painfully the same—men somewhere around forty, although two women also died.

“And how were they buried? In the city there was talk of lead caskets....

“The first six were buried in the usual manner—after all, we did not have the right diagnosis yet and wrote ‘bacterial pneumonia.’ The last six went as ‘malignant anthrax.’ There were no lead caskets—the coffins were coated with black tar.

“Now we waited—expecting symptoms to appear very soon in ourselves. After all, it was clear that the infection was spread by airborne particles. We decided to stay here so as not to take the contamination home. And everyone stayed—all the doctors, all the nurses.... There was even a pregnant one who never left her post. The days passed—no one came down with any symptoms.”

“And what conclusion did you arrive at?”

“That genetic engineering was at work here, creating such extremely effective bacteria that would selectively strike residents of a certain age, those capable of carrying a weapon. And no one was being contaminated by contact. To this day we do not know what kind of carrier it was, by what means contamination occurred. If it were the esophagus, family members would come down with it. If it were airborne particles, we would have been contaminated.”

N.A., doctor

“I am not a microbiologist, of course, but in my opinion we were dealing with some kind of anthrax apparently mixed with plague. The properties were similar to both. And they were dead-end properties—it was not passed on any further by an individual it had struck. One must give it its due—it was an astounding thing. It struck precisely those people who were needed.”

“What was this thing then in Sverdlovsk?”

“There can be no doubt—what we had was waste from a bacteriological weapon.”

“You were at Hospital No. 40 at that time?”

"First I was at No. 20, then No. 40 as a member of an emergency anti-epidemic commission. Everything began during my watch. First I had three people die. The same thing continued a second day.... Then we started soul-searching and consulting our leading experts.... They took a culture. Laboratory results led us to the idea that clearly something was wrong here. Then we took a map of the area and wind rose, looked at it, and saw that they were all coming from the same place. From here one didn't have to be a genius—everyone knows we have the 19th military installation.

"Then came civilian people, military people. Although I was on the emergency epidemic commission, we had no information whatsoever. When we started to ask questions, they let us know very politely but very firmly that it would be better to be silent. I was especially struck by a professor from Moscow. He was an expert, of course, and had a very fine manner of speaking, but it is simply amazing how he was able to concoct such nonsense—to talk so prettily at length about nothing."

"Do you have any figures to operate with?"

"No. I can only say that about 500 beds were prepared for hospitalization."

"And how do you relate to how closed we are on this subject?"

"What do we have, what do we not have.... Everyone prefers to remain silent concerning bacteriological weapons. It is indecent to talk about this in decent society."

B. Zislin, doctor of medical sciences, chief anesthesiologist of the region

"At that time I was consulting in the intensive care department of Hospital No. 20. I saw several patients at the same time with the same symptoms, and I was convinced that this was a serious contagion with which I was unfamiliar. It immediately affects all the organs—the lungs, the brain, and the kidneys...."

"And did the people die quickly?"

"One woman was a little better off and still conscious. She told me that everything began with a feverish chill, and that soon she was short of breath. They quickly put her on artificial respiration too and, like the others, she died. I found this suspicious. I immediately telephoned the regional public health department. I requested that the military reveal whether this was their doing. A half hour later they called me and said that everything was fine with the military...."

"Several years have passed.... What is your opinion today?"

"They were obligated to speak up. Secrets are secrets, but I believe that more than 70 people died.... Perhaps they managed to save some of them."

"But let us suppose, God forbid of course, that something similar happens again. How will you and your colleagues react?"

"If I see something like that again, I will find out...."

"If it is something like that. But might you see something quite different?"

"I do not think so. But if... I suppose that the military people will not hide it in the future. They do not have the right!"

An Open Secret

"They do not have the right...!"

Back then the military denied everything. And now?

This spring, the article "19th Installation" was published in the oblast newspaper URALSKIY RABOCHIY. It brought out into the open the military point of view on the events of 1979. Journalist S. Plotnikov visited that installation together with members of a representative delegation. This spared me the trouble of following that same trail and asking those same questions. Incidentally, I have reason to believe that the "stir" around the long-buried subject began after the interest shown in it on the part of the LITERATURNAYA GAZETA correspondent. But that is off the subject.

The article talks about the visit to the military installation or, more accurately, the military epidemiology sector of the Scientific Research Institute for Microbiology of the USSR Ministry of Defense. Yes, the military admits, earlier "the institute studied the technology and production of vaccinations for the protection of servicemen and the population from a number of dangerous infections." Today the center is on a cost accounting basis, and as a result it is quite interested in cooperating with "civilians": It has communicated facts in detail in the areas where it was possible. Such facts, of course, are important. But I imagine that the residents of Sverdlovsk were cheered up most of all by the news that production of vaccinations "for defense of troops and the population" ceased here in 1986....

But what happened when the previous work was still in full swing? Colonel A. Kharchenko, chief of the military epidemiology sector, gives an explanation. I quote: "The rumors which were going around the city in the spring of 1979 to the effect that an explosion took place on the territory of our institution and that the anthrax pathogen was discharged into the external environment do not have any real basis, primarily because we have never had any explosions of any sort."

But what about discharges? They happen on a regular basis even to this day. A few paragraphs later it is stated that "all discharges into the air and sewage are filtered and monitored." What good is correcting the terminological inaccuracies? In the end, what is the main significance for the affected region of the means by which the misfortune occurred—explosion, discharge, or exhaust?

But the colonel did not produce any further testimony, and instead of arguments he substituted the following psychological observation: "I believe that this absurd story has circulated because the majority of people are more ready to believe in fantastic things than in real and natural explanations."

I did not get the impression that the doctors with whom I had talked were so ready to believe in the fantastic—quite the opposite in fact.

On behalf of the educated minority with explanations, B. Mikhaulov, sector specialist, addresses the fantasizing majority: "In reality—and this has been established—the outbreak of anthrax illnesses among people was caused by a previous outbreak of this disease among agricultural livestock in many population centers of the southern part of Sverdlovsk Oblast. Professor I. Bezdenzhnyye and V. Nikiforov wrote an article about this which was published in 1980 in *ZHURNAL MIKROBIOLOGII, EPIDEMIOLOGII I IMMUNOBIOLOGII*...."

I looked up the article he had named, not without the shudder of a dilettante: The journal is highly technical. But the article by I. Bezdenzhnyye and V. Nikiforov—the former chief inspector of the RSFSR [Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic] who came at that time from Moscow to the Sverdlovsk extraordinary event and headed the commission that was created (its medical unit)—seemed absolutely readable. Moreover, it seemed that it would be more difficult for specialists in view of the scarcity of facts.

I personally had questions for the authors, and many of them.

For instance, I read: "Sporadic illnesses of anthrax in one of the areas of Sverdlovsk preceded the outbreak of anthrax among agricultural livestock on individual farms of the adjoining regions.... At that same time isolated instances of anthrax illnesses among people were reported...."

How were they isolated? What about the (approximately) 500 hospital beds that were readied? And the (approximately) 70 people who died? Let us recall that 12 died almost simultaneously in Hospital No. 20. We will add the 42 post-mortems with the same diagnosis in Hospital No. 40—F. Abramova, a pathological anatomist who attended all these post-mortems, gave this figure. We will also add several cases which occurred at other medical institutions. And these are all isolated illnesses?

"...and there were skin and intestinal forms of the infection." Why only skin and intestinal? What about pulmonary?

I quote the article again: "That the disease is related to anthrax was confirmed by the results of laboratory tests of sick people and animals. The pathogen of anthrax was isolated from meat taken for tests from two families of patients. In both cases the meat had been purchased

from private persons. The strains of the anthrax pathogens isolated from the meat were not distinguishable from the strains isolated from the patients."

But does this prove that the events that are mentioned are part of the specific chain of terrifying events that shook the city back then? Are there really no grounds to suppose that they existed parallel with them?

I had the opportunity to travel to the cemetery, visit the houses, and resort to the archives of the registry office—and I established that the first patients died at Hospital No. 20 on 9 April. And the first articles about weakened livestock and their possible infection appeared in the local press on 13 April. Which preceded which? Does not the conclusion suggest itself that the people died first and then as a result of their deaths preventive warnings were "superimposed"?

Why? I even pose this question within the bounds of the scholarly article I quoted. Why, if it was "simply" anthrax in Sverdlovsk, did people in military uniforms play first violin in the investigation of facts? Why was the whole story of the illness eliminated along with all records and all documentation from "concerned" institutions? Why now, 11 years afterward, are officials again visiting here and there on investigations? Is any other answer possible?

I hunted down a private home in the suburb of the city where a woman who died in Hospital No. 20, one of the first, had once lived. I held in my hands her death certificate which gave "bacterial pneumonia" as the cause. Some people had come for that certificate and wished to take it away, but the family would not give it up: "It is ours. It is all that is left to us."

I visited another household whose head, a worker at a ceramic factory, had died with the same diagnosis.

...I personally have an answer for all those "whys"—I declared it openly at the very beginning. But however well-argued it seems to me, I recognized that it is only a private opinion and only a private investigation. Official conclusions are needed. Quickly.

If there was a tragedy it should be called a tragedy, and the guilty should be called guilty. And to the degree that the information presented here is grounds for a parliamentary investigation, on behalf of the editorial board the author requests that our parliament create such a commission.

Otherwise we cannot ensure that lightning will not strike from a clear sky again tomorrow.

Irkutsk Official Views Aircraft Export Problems
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0600 GMT 4 Sep 90

[Text] For exporting countries, sales of military hardware abroad have long been a kind of rating for the standard of their technology. The Irkutsk Aircraft Factory is now